PRESS RELEASE - 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

Royal Court Theatre and Nica Burns announce full cast for world premiere of *The Afronauts* by Ryan Calais Cameron



The Royal Court Theatre and **Nica Burns** announce the full cast and creative team for the **World Premiere of *The Afronauts***, a Zambian space race epic by award-winning writer **Ryan Calais Cameron** (*For Black Boys..., Retrograde*) who will co-direct with **Monique Touko** (*Jaja's African Hair Braiding, Marie and Rosetta*). *The Afronauts* marks the finale of the Royal Court Theatre's 70th anniversary Downstairs season, and will run from **Saturday 14 November to Saturday 19 December**, with press night on Monday 23 November 2026. The cast was first revealed last night at a special launch party event hosted by the Royal Court in collaboration with The Rendition.

The international cast brings together Black British and Black African talent led by television, film and stage star **Lucian Msamati** (*Game of Thrones, Slow Horses, Conclave, Waiting for*

Godot) as Edward, and **Ama Qamata**, seen in leading roles in the Netflix series *Blood & Water* and the multi-award-winning indie hit *Fight Like a Girl*, who will be making her UK stage debut as Matha. The company is completed by **Ivanno Jeremiah**, who reunites with Ryan Calais Cameron following his critically acclaimed performance as Sidney Poitier in *Retrograde* and will play Simon, **Chomba S. Taulo** (*The Book of Mormon*) as Ben, **Munashe Chirisa** (*The Play That Goes Wrong*) as Cheelo, **Pamela Nomvete** (*Skeleton Crew*) as Grace, **Lukwesa Mwamba** (*Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*) as Liji, and **Prince Kundai** (*Bootycandy*) as David.

The creative team includes Set Designer **Soutra Gilmour**, Costume Designer **Kinnetia Isidore**, Lighting Designer **Ryan Day**, Composer and Sound Designer **Khalil Madovi**, Video Designer **Dick Straker**, Movement Director **Kloé Dean**, Wigs, Hair and Makeup Designer **Cynthia De La Rosa**, Casting Director **Heather Basten CDG CSA**, Dramaturg **Gillian Greer**, Cultural Dramaturg **Mwansa Phiri** and Assistant Director **Danielle Kassaraté.**

'As long as a man can dream, he can push the limits of what's possible'

Zambia, 1964: the space race has a new contender. As the world's great powers set their sights on the moon, a schoolteacher gathers a group of misfit dreamers and trains them for lift-off. *The Afronauts* tells the true(ish) story of the Zambian Space Program, and a nation's defiant dream to reach for the stars.

Ryan Calais Cameron, Writer and Co-Director, says: *"The Afronauts is a love letter to the dreamers history forgot. It's about what happens when imagination becomes a form of resistance, and how the fight for freedom isn't just political, it's cosmic. At its heart, this play asks: what does liberation look like when the whole universe is watching? For me, it's not just a story about reaching the moon, it's about the courage to believe we belonged there all along."*

Monique Touko, Co-Director, says: *"The Afronauts is an offering to those who want to break out of existing confines, reach for the stars, and believe in more than what appears to be available. It imagines a space where Black bodies and ideas are not bound, but redefined, rediscovered, and able to transcend beyond what we can comprehend. Ending the 70th season of the Royal Court, reframing and spotlighting this historic event is a huge honour. This show is a moment for the culture - a reflection of the past, highlighting the strength of the shoulders we stand on, the fight we unfortunately inherit and the opportunity to fly beyond expectation."*

Commissioned by the Genesis Foundation through the Genesis Next Generation programme at the Royal Court.

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ENDS.

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Images:
Cast headshots and biographies available here
Cast launch event photos available here
Ryan Calais Cameron and Monique Touko images available here
Show artwork available here

If you would like the press release in a different format for access reasons please let us know.

Upcoming press Performances:

Wednesday 7 October 2026	*Blood of my Blood* by Joy Nesbitt	Jerwood Theatre Upstairs
Monday 23 November 2026	*The Afronauts* by Ryan Calais Cameron	Jerwood Theatre Downstairs
Wednesday 9 December 2026	*Monument* by Rhys Warrington	Jerwood Theatre Upstairs

Listings

Royal Court Theatre and Nica Burns present
The Afronauts
By Ryan Calais Cameron
Jerwood Theatre Downstairs, Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, SW1W 8AS
Saturday 14 November - Saturday 19 December 2026
Press Night Monday 23 November 2026, 7pm
Monday - Friday, 7:30pm and 2:30pm
Saturday, 1:30pm and 6:30pm
Audio-described Saturday 5th December 2026, 1:30pm
Captioned Tuesday 8th December 2026, 7:30pm
Chilled Saturday 19th December 2026, 1:30pm
Standard Tickets £15 - £74.50
Concessions*
Under 35s***

Code of Conduct
The Royal Court has devised a Code of Conduct intended for staff, freelancers, audiences, participants, supporters, independent companies and wider stakeholders. It sets out the fundamental principles for how we work together: guidelines and expectations which reflect our legal duties, as well as our values and ethics – including anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice. Please read more here.

Biographies

Ryan Calais Cameron
Writer and Co-Director

Ryan is Associate Playwright at the Royal Court

Theatre Credits include: RETROGRADE (Kiln Theatre), nominated for Evening Standard Award,'Best Play', transferred to the Apollo Theatre, West End to outstanding five star reviews: "A deserved West End triumph for one of Britain's finest playwrights" (Dominic Cavendish, The Telegraph). FOR BLACK BOYS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED SUICIDE WHEN THE HUE GETS TOO HEAVY transferred from New Diorama to the Royal Court and then to the Apollo Theatre, West End in March 2023; it was nominated for and won multiple awards. A revival of the production opened at the Garrick Theatre on 29th February 2024; the run sold out and was extended.

Other plays include HUMAN NURTURE (Theatre Centre/Sheffield Theatres and national tour 2022); TYPICAL, (Nouveau Riche/Edinburgh Fringe Festival and Soho Theatre Upstairs 2020); QUEENS OF SHEBA, (Nouveau Riche), co-written with Jessica Hagan, winner of the 2018 Edinburgh Untapped Award, (Edinburgh Fringe, New Diorama Theatre, London and national tour 2019).

Ryan is also a writer for TV and Film.

Monique Touko
Co-Director

Theatre includes: *Marie and Rosetta* (Rose Theatre/ Wolverhampton Grand/ Chichester Festival / West End)*; The Boy at the Back of the Class* (UK Tour); *Liberation* (Royal Exchange/ Factory International); *Jaja's African Hair Braiding, School Girls; Or, the African Mean Girls Play, Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White* (Lyric Hammersmith); *The Boy at the Back of the Class, We Need New Names* (Tour)*; Gone Too Far!* (Stratford East); *The Clinic* (Almeida)*; Fair Play* (Bush)*; Malindadzimu* (Hampstead).

Other credits include: *Provenance* (Victoria Park)*; Chronixx, Cleo Sol* (All Points East, Victoria Park).

Awards include: *Olivier Award for Best Family Show* (The Boy at the Back of the Class).

With thanks to

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